

# AN EXECUTIVE-LEVEL SUSTAINABLE COMMITMENT

The appointment of Kevin Paylor to the newly-created post of Environment Director at Donaldson Associates Limited confirms the importance of environmental and sustainable issues at Board-level. After engaging with Fast-Track-14's six-month programme to prepare for ISO 14001 accreditation, while rolling out its own focussed integrated management system (IMS), the UK firm of independent consulting engineers has also celebrated twenty years of carefully managed growth and development. The changes give Environment Manager, Clare Brint, a unique strategic overview of contemporary risks and opportunities.

Donaldson Associates Limited's (DAL) recent 20th anniversary in construction was a celebration of change.

Today, the independent company, that began life in 1987 as a tunnelling specialist, has successfully broadened out to offer intelligent specialist geotechnical, civil and structural engineering consultancy services across the complete asset life cycle. With 120 staff operating in a spectrum of disciplines from four UK offices in Uttoxeter, Derby, York and Glasgow, DAL has successfully completed recent commissions in Ireland, New Zealand and Jersey.



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Wind farms - one of many sustainable challenges successfully taken up by DAL.

However, its twenty-year journey has been internal as well as external.

The company's anniversary also marked a re-assessment of the benefits to be had from effective management systems and information technology in a consultancy closely attuned to modern, swiftly changing markets. DAL's successful launch of its own integrated management system (IMS) has been designed to extend greater control of risks and sustainable efficiencies to all projects, offices, personnel, clients and professional activities with ease and convenience.

Environmental management plays a fundamental part in this widening perception. DAL saw Fast-Track-14 as the perfect vehicle to create its ideal environmental management system (EMS), with dynamic goals, methodology and an in-built driver for continuous performance improvement completely compatible with its own unfolding IMS.

However, the consultancy's choice of FT-14 also underlines a deeper determination to exploit the positive side of change.

DAL recognised preparing for ISO 14001 certification at the earliest opportunity was vital to success in the business side of modern sustainably-aware markets. With ISO 14001 credentials now a tendering pre-requisite for many prestigious competitive contracts, DAL made the environment an executive-level priority. No-one wants to miss commercial opportunities!

Kevin Paylor's keen appointment as Environment Director has emphasised just how seriously DAL recognises an environmental profile to be for a progressive business and its reputation. One of his earliest decisions was to join an FT-14 programme in the Yorkshire region.

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# SWIFT CONSTRUCTION GROUP

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Interestingly, while he personally became involved in FT-14's seven, highly-interactive, monthly workshops held in York, DAL's Environment Manager, Clare Brint, implemented the individual, detailed guidance steps provided by the programme's electronic ISO 14001 Toolkit to create a tailored EMS.

It was an extremely successful combination, says Brint, who divides her time effectively between strategic environmental management and her frontline role as a project manager.

“It worked very well. Kevin was enthusiastic about investing time to understand the company's environmental profile and to become familiar with the operation of our EMS. We spent many hours working through the practical implications and how we needed to build a system that would deliver for us,” she explains.

### Roll out to the entire group

In the first instance, Brint and Paylor concentrated on an EMS for DAL's York office, which has now been rolled out across the group. This is where the IMS online launch is significant.

DAL's IMS is designed to comprehensively gather, store and give common online access to quality, environmental and OHS data captured methodically in complementary formats. It has involved a revision - and reduction - of procedures to ensure simplicity and uniformity. The aim is to provide all project staff with a sophisticated tool for calculating and understanding their liabilities and how they can plan to meet risks and turn them into opportunities.

Server-based, it combines and replaces previous ad hoc, primarily paper-based, systems. Instead, it makes good use of easy-to-follow online process maps (flow charts) with local hyperlinks.

FT-14 linked naturally into this regime.

“We did have an EMS before FT-14 but it wasn't a functioning management tool,” says Brint. “Environmental assessments were generally made at the request of clients, rather than automatically. It was quite fragmented, to the extent that often even SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) were overlooked.”

“Our recent changes mean that environmental issues now receive equal billing with OHS. It demonstrates to everyone that DAL's Directors are now seriously committed to environmental responsibility,” she says.

Brint's aim has been to introduce pragmatic solutions. “Managers are now asked to complete an environmental checklist for all projects, so we know for sure that we are not missing anything. I've also changed the risk assessment procedure. Previously, if, for example, a sub-contractor was drilling, the details were tagged to the back of the OHS document, perhaps with additional notes about not spilling fluids, not discharging to water courses and Environment Agency requirements. There was no set way of presenting information and risk assessments were very subjective.

“Following the FT-14 methodology, I have revised this to add a numerical index that gives an objective weighting. We have moved on to ask ourselves what the specific risks are for each particular environmental aspect and to classify the conclusions systematically. It means that project managers are now able to grade their activities with contractors, rather than simply thinking of environmental awareness in terms of responding to emergencies.”

As an example, Brint points to a straightforward railway project on the Highland Line that was managed in 2002 and again in 2006. Covering two rock cuttings that Network Rail deemed to be poor, they involved simple contractor work and the attention of SEPA (Scottish Environmental Protection Agency) and SNH (Scottish Natural Heritage). In 2006, Network Rail was given a full Executive Appraisal, while care was taken that two contractor compounds formerly four miles apart were now joined. Steps were also taken to comply with a new ecological report. Small changes perhaps, but with important ramifications.



*Renewable energy provision, such as wind power, requires an increasingly empathetic understanding of the natural environment.*

### Supply chain pressures - and shared benefits

There are also supply chain implications. A formal, five-page pro-forma now has to be completed for any procurement, from office materials to survey or drilling company services. The company asks to see certificates for standards - such as ISO 14001 - plus details of presentation and any environmental infringements. Companies not on the list are not employed.

The FT-14 process has also led to a system that welcomes environmental suggestions from staff - and lets them know that their informed contributions have been valued and recognised. "It's a simple step, but I've initiated a reference number system to recognise that their first-hand experiences and ideas have been acknowledged," adds Brint. "These include useful observations on central issues, such as office recycling, but can go further. An example is our York office where, by request, we have implemented the Government 'Cycle to Work' scheme, which subsidises the purchase of cycles when used as an employees primary means of transport."

The scheme is open to committed Directors!

### Web-based plus workshops on Fast-Track-14

FT-14 was developed by ISYS International, which implements the half-year programme throughout the construction industry in partnership with regional construction bodies and major clients

Participants work together closely in peer-groups, using a powerful, web-based interactive information and communication resource - the ISO 14001 Toolkit - to access detailed step-by-step guidance, document templates and discussion forums.

Crucially, the online system also means that ISYS - and company executives - can monitor progress constantly, identifying where individual support is needed. Equally importantly, those on the programme share problems and ideas to reach better solutions.

Moreover, managers also meet face-to-face once a month in local, structured peer-group workshops - known to be enjoyable but demanding - with expert support provided by ISYS.

By focusing on identifying and controlling environmental risks, FT-14 helps companies to achieve legal and regulatory compliance, while demonstrating environmental commitment to their key stakeholders. Other business benefits include improved resource efficiency, reduced pollution and lower waste treatment and disposal costs. Companies can also enhance their corporate image, creating a real competitive edge as sustainable demands rise.

FT-14 also creates the framework to support other contemporary management systems - such as Quality and OHS - and their integration.

[www.donaldsonassociates.com](http://www.donaldsonassociates.com)

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